

EXHIBIT 5

RO-6-138

San Diego Can't Hit State Climate Goals Without Major Transportation Changes

San Diego isn't a trolley line here, a few improved bus routes there and a new highway lane over there away from meeting the requirements. The status quo, or modest alterations of it, won't work. The region needs a new vision entirely.

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[February 14, 2019](#)



Photo by Sam Hodgson

San Diego is coming to grips with how much it needs to change as a region if it's going to make good on promises to slash its carbon footprint.

The region simply can't meet state requirements for thwarting climate change the way things are and the way they're headed, Hasan Ikrhata, director of the San Diego Association of Governments, said at a Friday board meeting. Even if the region built the trolley lines and bus services leaders have been discussing, it would not change enough. Either state law would have to change, or regional leaders need to reimagine plans on the books now with something meaningfully different than the status quo.

It was a major acknowledgment that the sprawling, car-centric way the county has grown for decades is incompatible with the state's vision of itself as a global leader on climate change.

To deal with it, Ikhata proposed killing his agency's attempt to renew the county's long-term blueprint for housing, transportation and emissions so it can start from scratch on a new vision that would let the region comply with state law.

But his proposal carries significant risk. It would delay the agency's attempt to update its long-term plan – which is required by both the state and the federal government – for as long as two years.

San Diego could lose out on state and federal funding opportunities during that period, and transportation projects that are underway could be delayed.

"We don't really have many choices right now," Ikhata said, to a stunned board. Many there could do little but commend his honesty.

"As much as we don't want to hear this, because it isn't good news, you're not just here to give us good news, but to make the changes that we need," San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer said. "That's what I always want to hear."

Forcing the issue is a state requirement – owing to landmark environmental law, SB 375, but formally [adopted by the state's Air Resources Board last year](#) – that says the region must cut its carbon emissions per person by 19 percent of 2005 levels by 2035. That will require people to drive fewer miles with internal combustion

engines. SANDAG, and the rest of the so-called big four planning agencies in the state, representing Los Angeles, San Francisco and Sacramento, together [lobbied for a lower requirement](#).

“As it stands today, we are not going to be able to meet the greenhouse gas emissions target,” Ikhata said. “We are not going to submit a plan that does not meet the requirement.”

SANDAG is due to adopt a new plan at the end of this year. The agency had already in September admitted it wouldn't be able to meet that deadline, after scandal led to the ouster of its long-time leader, state reform of its voting structure and eventually the hiring of Ikhata.

Instead, it decided to delay updating a new plan until early 2020. But since agencies that don't have new, up-to-date plans aren't eligible for state or federal funding, that meant risking losing out on some money – which is an especially tough beat for SANDAG, which is already short on funds and needs to overperform in attracting out-of-town money if it wants to complete existing promises – but agency leaders thought the six-month delay

was short enough that they could manage it effectively.

Now, Ikhata said their inability to put together a scenario of new housing development with new transit and highway improvements that can show a 19 percent reduction in greenhouse gasses is severe enough that a six-month delay won't do anything.

That's why he will ask the board of directors on Feb. 22 to restart the planning process and delay adopting a new outline for *two years*, until as late as the beginning of 2022.

He said all the transportation network scenarios the agency has tested – essentially, all the transportation projects and ideas the region has been wrestling with in recent years – simply don't measure up to the state's requirements.

In other words, San Diego isn't a trolley line here, a few improved bus routes there, and a new highway lane over there away from meeting the requirements. The status quo, or modest alterations of it, won't work. The region needs a new vision entirely.

"Let's face it. If we continue like this we will never meet it," Ikhata said.

He assured the board that his new vision, built from scratch, would far surpass the 19 percent reduction.

At the same time, Faulconer's increased presence at SANDAG is changing the agency's relationship with the cities that make up the board, especially the city of San Diego, which can now veto any board decision it dislikes and can force through decisions with the support of just a couple other small cities.

Four years ago, for instance, Colin Parent, from the transportation advocacy group Circulate San Diego, and Nicole Capretz from the Climate Action Campaign, put together a report showing that, given the transportation network SANDAG had envisioned, it was not possible for San Diego to even approach a goal from its Climate Action Plan of having 50 percent of people who live near transit to get to work without driving. Instead, only 15 percent would commute by bike, walking or transit, the report found.

SANDAG and then-director Gary Gallegos effectively said that the city's commitment was not its problem, and that the city's goals were unrealistic in the first place.

Last week, Faulconer – who used to [almost never attend SANDAG meetings](#) – made clear that he expected the region's transportation system to facilitate the city's transit goals.

“All of our individual climate action plans – we have a very ambitious climate plan in San Diego, and we're very proud of it,” he said. “We have to dovetail with SANDAG to make this work as a region.”

Faulconer said he didn't want to see a regional plan that would “just squeak in – we want to be leaders.”

The move to delay adopting the plan, however, could make SANDAG less of a leader statewide. Despite the mayor's admonition, the agency and the elected officials who run it probably won't be too upset about it.

That's because SANDAG always happened to be the first organization of its kind in the state to update its required regional plan each cycle.

The agency was first out of the gate in interpreting and implementing new state requirements, such as in 2011 when its plan was sued by environmentalists and then-Attorney General Kamala Harris in a high-profile case that went to the state Supreme Court.

"We are not alone in this," Ikhata said. He said the other three major regional planning agencies are having as hard a time as SANDAG.

It's not a done deal that SANDAG will really delay the whole plan by two years. That's what Ikhata said was needed, but multiple board members, including Faulconer and San Diego Council President Georgette Gomez, said that was too long to wait.

"Maybe there's a subset of projects in the interim, because that's unacceptable," Gomez said. "We should be acting now, because we need to push the envelope or some of these cities are going to be underwater. That's just reality."

For now, Ikhata is focused on how to minimize the chance of losing state or federal money while the region goes without a plan.

He said he was meeting with state legislators from San Diego in hopes one of them would carry a bill in Sacramento that would let it adopt a plan after its late-2019 deadline. Failure to do so could jeopardize the region's share of cap-and-trade or gas tax revenue, he said.

Regional leaders would also need to work with the federal government for an administrative fix that would let it go without a plan outlining air quality issues.

"There is risk for the region," Ikhata said.

"There is risk of project delays. There is risk of funding losses. We're going to try to minimize that risk ... but the risk is still there."
